1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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(Frontispiece)

The Saramacca River below the Mamadam falls.

[Frontispiece]

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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PREFACE

is relatively small, and is localized in the interior of French Guiana, not far from the Dutch boundary. In any consideration of the Guiana Negroes, yet a fourth group must be kept in mind—that of the Negroes of the coastal region, who remained enslaved until their emancipation in 1865.

The country of the Saramacca people is reached from Paramaribo, the capital and port of the colony of Suriname (Dutch Guiana), by the weekly train which goes some ninety-five miles to Kabel, where the railway meets the river. From Kabel transportation into the far interior is by dugout canoe, owned and manned by Saramacca men. The country above Kabel, which the Saramacca people call the "big bush," is jungle. Over the watershed lie the Amazon basin and the forests of northern Brazil. Once in this region, the traveler has no contact with European civilization, though he is still under the protection of the Dutch Government.

The picture which we draw of the Saramacca people is based upon two field trips to Dutch Guiana, undertaken in the summers of 1928 and 1929. During our second trip we traversed the entire stretch of the Saramacca country from below Kabel, where the Awka villages are located, to the last native habitation on the Pikien Rio, beyond which are some fields, then uninhabitated miles of wilderness to the Brazilian border.

The ethnological work conducted among the Saramacca tribe of Bush Negroes and the Negroes of the coastal region of Suriname represents a portion of an investigation into the physical and cultural characteristics of the Negroes of the New World. This research, which is still in progress, has included field work in the United States, in Dutch Guiana, and in Africa, and some comparative study in the islands of the Caribbean. It began in 1923 with an inquiry into Negro-white crossing in the United States.[1] As the work progressed it became evident that the problem

[1] For the results of this portion of the investigation, see M. J. Herskovits, "The American Negro, a Study in Racial Crossing" (1928); and "The Anthropometry of the American Negro" (1931).

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Chapter III

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

I

ON THIS, the second morning after the burial of Sedefo's brother, Bayo started downstream from the village of Djamungo before daybreak. With all the vigor of his youth and the freshness of the morning, he pushed off from shore, and with sharp, short strokes ran his canoe into midstream and through the foaming rapids below the village. In and out, and in, went the paddle, until he was past the rough water which made a tumbling fortification for his village. His eyes wandered back for an instant as he sat there, taking in at a glance the dark outlines of the two silk-cotton trees which reared themselves above the line of matted jungle, and the gleam of natural clearing on the opposite, uninhabited bank, where trees stood singly here and there above the low underbrush. "Ai-yo!" he exclaimed half aloud, thinking how well it was with his village. It was good to have been born where twin silk-cotton trees stood and across the river from where the Apuku—the little people of the bush—held council at night. It was the Apuku, to be sure, who had seen to this pleasant open place, and no man, whatever his need, would put to use this land which the gods had accommodated to their own purposes.

Those rapids, too, were higher than any on the lower river, he thought, as he paddled vigorously in the still water. To have thought of the rapids at all, while going

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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other bank, and now as we reached the opposite shore, we saw the small opening of a minor channel which we were to take. With astonishing nicety the tip of the juncture of the main stream and this smaller channel was reached at the same instant. Loin cloths were adjusted, and once more the pole-men took up their pole-sticks and continued the slow passage against the current.

The boats were now again traveling close to the bank, so that the details of the forest which fringed the river could be clearly seen. Straight from the water rose the wall of sheer green, all of a dark, almost dull purplish color—a wall of fifty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty feet and more, as the lianas dropped down from the upper branches of the great trees which gave these parasitic growths their support. Here and there we saw a brilliant wing of a bird, and a Bush Negro, ever ready to augment his meager food supply, would unlimber an ancient shotgun, steady himself, and shoot. In Sedefo's canoe, Angita, his pole-man, saw a blue and golden macaw silhouetted as it sat on a slender branch. Out came the shotgun. The macaw, startled but unhit, flew to another branch farther upstream. We crept slowly, noiselessly ahead, and when we were close by Angita shot again, and missed again. The macaw now did not trouble to fly away, and when Angita made aim once more, Sedefo stopped him.

"No, mati—Let him be, friend. The gods are protecting him. Put away your gun."

Again we cut across, as we regained the wide channel, this time so that the men might speak their errand to the spirit of their great ancestor, the god of the large creek. We did not go too close, however, and all we could see was an azang again, the spiritual guard of palm fronds, and beyond the whitened trunk of a tree and a slender stick with a bit of white cotton attached to its end.

Sedefo spoke conversationally. "*Avo*—ancestor—we are going up the river. We are working for the American Bak'a. We are on our way to the G'ama's country. Grant

1t Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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was needful, and since then he had often made prayer to his boat, and the boat had carried him safely.

But this is what happened.

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On our fourth day up the river we were on our way early, because the men said the falls ahead were difficult, and they wanted to be through them before they stopped to eat. It took us more than an hour to pass the rapids, for the land rose higher and higher, and the water cascaded from one ledge to the next, often in curving channels of swift water that were too deep to allow the use of pole-sticks, and too swift for the paddles to cope with.

[133]

There were also those stretches which were without the piled rocks to give the men a footing for pulling the boats over, so that a rope had to be used, and the going was slow and treacherous. Each of the dugouts had this long rope fastened to its prow, and ahead, on the first ledge, were two or more of the men, the other end of the rope in hand, waiting for the signal to start hauling, while holding on to the sides of the boat as they swam were as many men as could be spared, so that if the rope broke, the boat would not be swept downstream, to go crashing against the rocks. These men who faced the fast water of their river, worked as though at the sight of it their Kromanti fighting spirit had entered their bodies, as if not men were there, but an impersonal force pitting itself against the force of the river. Even where the water was not too deep, and they could haul the boat, care could not be slackened for an instant—a wrong turn, and the boat would be capsized, or, what would be as serious, the impact of a rock might cut a gash in its side or bottom, filling it with water faster than they could manage to bring it to a bank. But at last the sound of the falling water was behind us, and the men, once they were in the still water again, went on with the casualness that they fell into with their river when the danger was over, and cast about for a pleasant place to stop and eat.

All at once there was a shout from behind us. Each boat echoed it shrilly. What's that? Whose boat?

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Chapter V

THE SHRINE TO THE RIVER GODS

I

ON THE narrow strip of land below the Mamadam, our hammocks were slung between trees whose trunks leaned well over the water, so that once we stretched out on the canvas, it was like swinging over an abyss to the rhythm of water wearing down rock.

At one time the shrine to the gods had stood on this clearing, but boats had gone aground in the falls, and rafts which needed but little urging when the spirits were friendly were swung about in the current and lost to their kingdom at the river bottom. Even now a great log lay wedged in between rocks in the middle of the stream. The water had worn grooves into its hard surface, yet there it was, held fast against the timeless flaying of the falls.

Nor was that all. One year when the time for the new rains came, the rain did not fall. In the villages the priests climbed the ladders within the sacred enclosures and from on high poured out libations to the ancestors, beseeching them to intercede in behalf of the living. Those who had river spirits went to the waterside when the moon was dead to dance to the gods. But the drums gave back a dull sound, and the dancing was listless. Those who plunged into the river to swim against the rapids while the drums intoned the exhortations did not remain under water long, and when they came up they uttered no oracles. Many who were known to be possessed by powerful spirits paced back

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

her become pale again. This may happen to you when you get to the Mamadam."

As he spoke, he began to beat on the table the drum rhythm which calls the river god, and he sang,

"Today, today, O Spirit,
Hard times are upon us
Ingi-o.
Hard times are upon us.
Today, today, Boyo,
Hard times are upon us
Ingi-e."

And then he sang another song, which he said had been sung at the time when black people were running away from slavery, and is still heard at dances to the spirits of the river, the *watra ingi*, as the river gods are called in the city. In it, he called on the agida, the great drum upon which, in town as in the bush, the Negroes call the river gods, and on *Kopsi*, the name of one of the spirits of the water. This time he sang,

"I will play the agida today,
I will knock the agida today-o
Kopsi will foil the magic
Of the crowing cock.
O, I will play the agida today,
I will knock the agida, today-o,
Kopsi will foil the magic,
Of the crowing cock.
I will play the agida today."

3

As we gained the island where the shrine itself stood and looked about us from the high rocks of the sacred spot, there lay before us in the early morning light a scene of inexpressible beauty. At dusk the narrow strips of land which forced the river into three channels had been like dark machetes plunged into the body of the great stream.

REBEL DESTINY

133 But now a soft haze floated over stream and bush. To the right was the Ingi Sopi channel, dropping so sheer that not even an unloaded dugout could make its way up the rapids, not a single log of wood could be floated down. To the left was the Mamadam, a smoother, more rounded slope. It was up these falls that our boats would later be hauled.

501 484 Below us on the rocks our men were unloading the corials and carrying the provisions along the narrow trodden path to the topmost ledge of the falls, where the empty dugouts would be reloaded after they had been taken up through the streaming water.

133 Beyond lay the full stretch of the river. As far as the eye could see, there were none of the channels, none of the many islands which are met with everywhere on this river from its very headwaters to the reaches of the tidal belt near the coast. About us was a stillness which the very roar [136] of the water heightened. The parrots had long ago passed on in pairs. The butterflies would wait for the sun before they went winging from the east bank to the west. This was a moment of pure interlude. No sun, no breeze, no 000 sound, no glow. This was the moment before the fragmentary dawn would end, before the haze would lift, this the moment when night, having met day, as the Bush Negroes said, was disappearing from sight.

"It is fine here, ai!" Bayo called to us, as he walked on [482] with a large canister balanced on his head, making his way up the rocks with the sureness and ease of one who is strolling down a lane with the consciousness of a pleasant encounter at the next turning.

798 346 As soon as the mist had lifted, we walked up the rocks to the shrine. Facing us and the lower river, a tall, slender pole, weathered to a pale silver, stood higher than the roof of the shrine in front of which it was planted. At its top were the crude outlines of a head and, some three feet from its base, two side pieces were nailed to it and grounded at an angle to steady the image against the onrush of a sudden wind. A short distance from the pole was the shrine

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Chapter IX

A NIGHT AT S'EI

I

[133 137] FROM day to day the mood of the river changed, and the mood of the bush changed with it. The dankness of the river bank gave way to the smell of red, sun-scorched earth. No longer was the farther shore the forbidding wall of a great canyon. The flowering lianas, as they climbed a hundred feet and more from the roots of the trees they had enveloped, were making of it a tapestry. The blooms which showed against the masses of green seemed at first of the palest yellow with threads of white, or yellow with glints of gold in them, or the faintest of orange and violet. Later when the flaming gold, the scarlet and purple clusters appeared, they still did not mar the somber weave of the timeless pattern, for the deep note of this bush in any season is green, and no pushing, garish colors, no conceits of turning leaves or fragrant flowers can sound an echo here. As well expect the brilliantly tinted butterflies cruising from one bank to the other to make a [136] whir in their passage, as to look for it to be otherwise.

The air, however, became steadily drier, the green more varied and pleasing, and the land rising and sloping gave an occasional glimpse of a horizon. If something in the shade of the river banks still spoke of the way of the constrictor, the sudden lashing out of the tail, there was now also the pleasant consciousness of its long lethargy. The swish of wings overhead, when we walked for short intervals through

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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the uncleared bush, or the sight of a snake twined about a liana, no longer struck terror, and the flaying rains which came down so suddenly, and as suddenly were over, no longer even aroused uneasiness.

At the prow of our boat Bayo poled vigorously and continued his countless variants of the seketi song we had been hearing everywhere on the river, while Bibifo had made a refrain of our question, "How do you say this in your Saramacca language?" He would paddle in silence for a long time, only to begin muttering at the most unexpected moments, "Sa'macca tongo!" in the way of an old man who talks to himself. He would then repeat it over and over in ridicule of us, and sometimes in a singsong voice he would improvise lines about the white man who wanted to know how everything was called in the true, true Saramacca language, and how all that was told him he wrote down in a book.

"Great-grandfather," we would say to him, "why do you say this? Isn't it all right for us to want to learn how to talk to the G'aman?"

"*Kere-kere*—It's all right."

But having said this, he would engage Bayo in conversation, clipping his words, and using so much idiom and parable as utterly to confound us.

"Your language is difficult, great-grandfather."

"Ya-hai, it is meant for the people of the bush, white man," he would say with a pride we had not looked for from the mild Bibifo, who was now called Adrian. There was, it appeared, potency in the "word," and magic. The names for things, and the things themselves were one. The knowledge of Saramacca names belonged to the Saramacca people, and whether as Bibifo or Adrian, he was above all a Saramacca Negro, and a member of an important clan.

2

When we had been seven days on the river, our cook came to us and said he wanted to talk about something we had best know.

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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175 Now we were in the true, true Saramacca country, the land which the Bush Negro feels to be entirely his own. White men, it is true, had been here before, but only a handful, and the gods of the river, who were powerful, saw to it that of these not many got back to the white man's land. True, true Saramacca country! Every Bush Negro we met on the lower river spoke of it with the deepest feeling.

"It is all right here," one man after another had said, "but wait until you see the upper river, the true-true Saramacca!"

It was here that the first Bush Negro villages had been built, though this seemed fabulous to the strangers who, in strong boats, guided by men who were wise in the moods and courses of the river, had had nine days of hard travel on the way. The lower-river villages began to appear only after peace had been declared and had proved lasting. Eighty-six years ago men from the upper river who lived beyond the Granman's own village, in the Grand Rio, had come down and built the village of Gansee, which was some four hours' paddling upstream from the railhead.

We spoke of this to Bibifo, who himself was born in this country.

"You may well wonder, white man."

361 103 Here was no danger of having to wrest a camp from the bush at night, when the short tropical dusk came to overtake the traveler. Villages followed close, one upon the other. Here was Ma'lobbi, where the beauty of the wood [322] carver's art had made us linger beyond the time allotted to us for making the journey from S'ei to Asindopo Lantiwe. Here was Hei Kununu—High Mountain—which rose on a ● [133] steep slope above the river, and was pleasant to see after the long stretches of flat plain that lay below. Semoisi, noted for its riches, was there, and Pempeh, bearing a name well known in the Ashanti country in Africa. Here villages 203 were so close to each other that they could announce our approach on the talking drums.

"What is it we hear, Bayo?" we would ask.

"They are cutting down trees, Bak'a."

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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"In the true, true Saramacca . . . "

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House of one recently dead.

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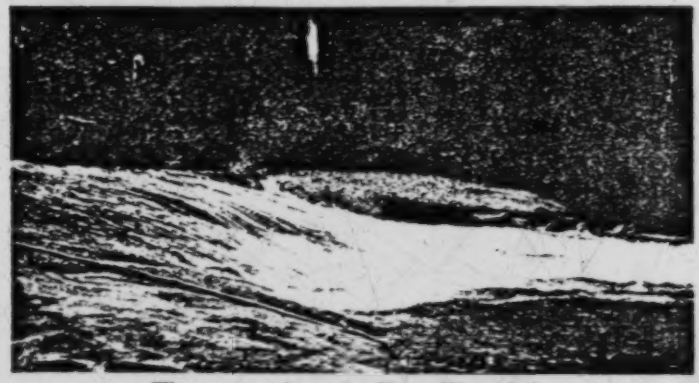

The approach to the Tapa Wata falls.

[p. 170 (A)]

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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798 The other white man was the Catholic missionary who
797 for years had been living in the Gran Rio. He was a friend of the Saramacca people, and they liked him. Now this white man wanted to see Dahomey. He said that he, too, had a strong God who protected him. He asked so many times that they at last promised to take him there. But when he got to Pempeh he fell asleep, and he slept till . . . till they reached the Granman's country. So his life was saved. The gods, knowing that he was a friend of the Saramacca people, did not want to kill him. They put him to sleep until Dahomey was well out of reach.

"And this is what happened to you, Bak'a. The gods did not want to hurt you, so you did not see."

2

• 133 Past these rapids and another stretch of rough water, and then before us lay the highest falls of the Saramacca. To the right, over a ledge of rock spreading in an unbroken sweep across its entire width poured the Gran Rio, the
[361] river up which lay the villages of the Loango clan, and beyond, the untrodden jungle which barricaded the way to the country of the Indians, and the basin of the Amazon. To the left was the final bit of fast water that remained between us and the village where the Granman awaited us. We were at last in the Pikien Rio.

Here the stream narrowed, and we could see on both banks the people who were waiting to see us pass. The
[574] gay colors of the women's cloths were brilliant against the background of green, and their hallooing reached our ears above the rush of the water. A canoe with several young men came alongside.

"We are here to help you with your boats. We have been sent by the Granman. Fire three shots to let him know you are in the Pikien Rio."

516 We fired, and instantly there was an answering salute of
[201] three guns. With the reinforcement of paddlers, it did not take long to reach the island which separated us from the landing place of Asindopo Lantiwe. Here all strangers

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

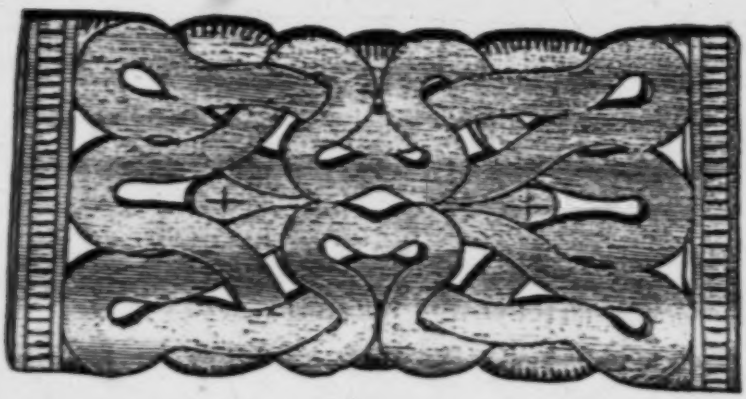
as they stood in their breech-cloths before the people, and the purchasers walked up and felt of them to try their flesh and soundness. The darkies were obliged to go through every sort of motion. It seemed at times as if their arms would be pulled out of joint or their jaws cracked by some of the Dutchmen. One dame was not satisfied until she forced a wench to screech by squeezing her breast cruelly. In two days the vendue was over. The grown men fetched as high as a thousand guilders and the boys and girls and women from seven to eight hundred, which were considered good prices."

The slaves were then put to work in the sugar fields. The overseers treated them cruelly and enjoyed it, with the callousness of their century; overseers in Virginia and Jamaica were doing the same with no less zeal. The planter's lash was often "incrusted with blood."

Inevitably some Negroes tried to run away. Near by was the jungle, a refuge from the white terror. From time to time runaway blacks succeeded in escaping into the bush. There they joined other fugitives, forming small bands.

The character of the country favoured them. The undergrowth is so thick that overland travel is impossibly laborious and slow. The rivers, save for a short distance near the ocean, are unnavigable because of their torrential rapids. The Surinam, up which the slave ships sailed to Paramaribo, has seldom been explored to its extreme upper reaches; it is *terra incognita* to white men.

The fugitives were quite at home in the jungle. In this



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Chapter Two

UPRIVER

EIGHT miles an hour the river moves, down long 133
stretches of rapids and fast water, over great rocks in the river-bed. Any sort of outboard motor would be torn to pieces. There is nothing to do but pole upstream in dugout canoes to the Djuka country.

Bush Negro boatmen, with glossy thighs and bearing 582
backs, stand at the bows. They plant their great ten-foot poles in the river-bed and pull against them. As the motion of the boat carries them past the planted poles, they walk back along the gunwales, pushing the poles to the extreme end. They are retrieved, wheeled in a great arc, and again planted in the river-bed. This makes a rare picture in the sunlight on

1/2 [For caption, see category 27 116, p. 204. -- Analyst]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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Bush Negroes Paddling a Loaded Dug-Out Canoe Up the Rapids.
Photo by Carvid

[Facing p. 12]

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

224 into the ground, becoming roots. The jungle vines, the lianas,
648 twine about the boles of palms, adding to the tangle of leaves.
137 The jungle is one immense struggle, none the less fierce because it is silent. The foliage is fighting for light and air.

224 We wade across a number of small creeks that bar our
648 path. Beautiful flat-winged butterflies hover in the hot air. The drone of other insects continues until our ears become accommodated to the sound and we no longer hear it. For five hours the trek continues.

At eleven o'clock a halt is called for lunch. The Djukas
[62] drop their fifty-pound packs, under which they have trotted more easily than the white with only a gun and canteen. A little fire is started and we begin to eat. The creek beside the camp has no name; it is known only as a small tributary of the Lombe Creek. This is the occasion for a little ceremony. The stream is to be named after the first person to eat beside it, which in this case is a white man. A Bush Negro takes a mouthful of water from the creek and spits it back, motioning us to do the same. We comply. Then the Negro names the stream *"Datra Cong Creekee"*—"Doctor Kahn Creek." The others respond with solemnity, "Daso." We pass a few pleasantries and go on.

By two o'clock the fatigue is beginning to tell on the bahkra. A halt is called. The country gets higher as we leave
● [63] the neighbourhood of the river, but the bush does not thin out. The ground is rolling, with knolls fifty feet high. Up these the carriers scramble like goats, despite their load, but Daniels says they are going slow because of the bahkra. Be-

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

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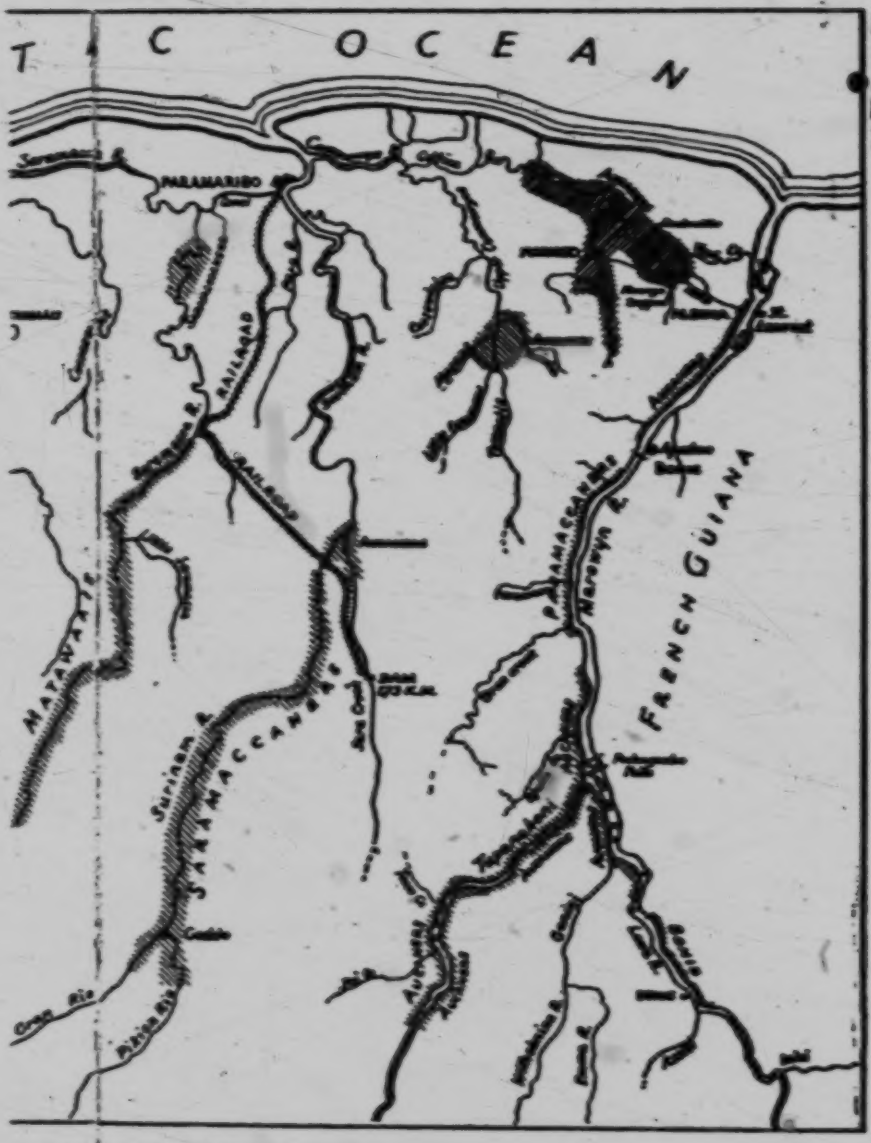
[Facing p. 100, Sec. A]

Distribution of Bush Negro Tribes
Drawn after a sketch by

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8



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gro Tribes in Dutch Guiana
: sketch by Rupalli

[Facing p. 100, Sec. B

/6 cont./

175 pacified Bush Negroes. From then on they received from the
648 Netherlands Government annual presents consisting of guns, herbs, lead, tobacco, rice, salt, dram, and so forth.

648 In later times, however, these were gradually decreased
829 by the government and finally completely abolished, as a result of which the Negroes no longer so willingly and without remuneration want to be of service to the government; since they believe that with the conclusion of the peace they came to an agreement with the government that on their part the Whites would no longer be hindered in anything, while they would endeavor to assist the government whenever that should be necessary, in return for which the presents mentioned above would be handed out to them annually on the part of the government. At present they complain about their treatment by the government and refuse to believe that they can and may trust the Whites.

101 The Bush Negroes are divided into four tribes: /7/
103 1st. Aucaners, who have their dwelling place, Auca, on the
● 133 river Marowyne; and they have their working places on the river above Cottica, where they come from the Marowyne by way of the Wanakreek. Among themselves they are called Joeka /Djuka/ and by the Whites, Aucaners, after the plantation Auca, where on 19 October 1760 peace was concluded with them.

2nd. Saramaccaners, who live on the river above Surinam, principally near the waterfall Arasoebanja near Gjengjen and Prakieki, and have their working places along the same river and in the cove /kreek," creek, cove"/ Taaiboto Kouloegou and Kassipora. They are called Saramaccaners by the Whites, after the river of that name (where they formerly lived), and among themselves Wousie or Moejére.

3rd. Mantoewari, who have their dwelling place on the river above Saramacca and their working places along the same river on Maripaston and in the cove Mindrinetie. They are names like the Saramaccaners, since they, too, although separate, live on the same river.

/29 cont./

439 Thus it is known to me that they have gone to one or
501 another plantation in order to sell timber, which they tie to their
505 korjalen or canoes after having made it into rafts with bush ropes
[283] (tough liana stalks), and have misled the Europeans in a scandalous manner.

[284] They make their squared timber into rafts in the following manner. Four thick strong round timbers are laid crosswise and tied together, two above and two under the korjaal; the timber is pushed in between these and fastened, so that the whole thing forms a firm long rectangle with the korjaal in the middle /30/ with which they make long journeys from the upper to the lower
[283] rivers. This timber that is made into rafts and carried along by the korjaal is called kokroko; they tie light and floating wood to long beams with bush rope (called boessitetei) (1); thus tied to the

1. From the copaiva.

heavy wood they drag it along down the river.

Chapter XXI

Understanding among Themselves

114
133 Not long ago I found myself among them on the river Upper Commewijne on the Tempati (a branch of the river named, on the left going upstream; this branch runs into the mountains, which are reported as ruddle mountains /roodenberg/.

114
648 Residing among them, I made many attempts to induce them to track down those in hiding who did not belong to their tribes and fugitives of a later time, and to make known to them that by governmental decree in the course of the year 1863, before the emancipation, a general amnesty regarding them had been issued, so that they could return to their former dwelling places without fear of punishment. The reason that induced me to acquaint them with this was that I saw in the return of these persons

4: Geijskes--13 G, N 5 (1952) 1954 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

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Survey map of the agricultural lands of the Bush Negroes of the Marowijne /Maroni/. Made from aerial photographs by the Central Bureau Luchtkaartering Paramaribo /Central Bureau for Aerial Surveying, Paramaribo/. Taken in 1947.

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Fig. 1. Ground of a Paramaccaner on a hill beside the river. For want of flat terrain, the slopes of hills are used. The surroundings are second growth. -- Marowijne near Grankreck, Oct. 1952.

[311]

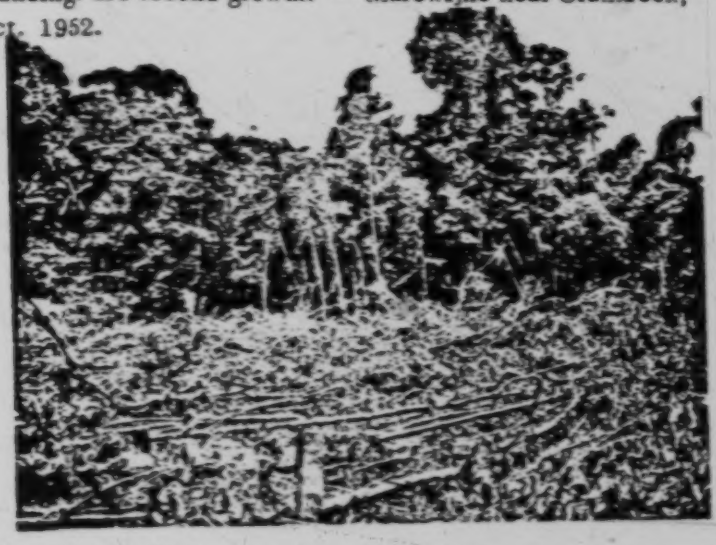

Fig. 2. Newly laid-out ground of an Aucaner, in young second growth. The slender trunks are typical. -- Tapanahoni, Saniki, Oct. 1952.

133
137
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Fig. 3. Ground on the slopes of the Malobbi range. The surroundings are primary virgin forest; in the distance, the Lely range. -- Tapanahoni, Malobbi, Oct. 1952.

Fig. 4. Newly cleared ground along the river, on a steep slope. The danger of erosion is great. The surroundings are second growth. -- Marowijne near Grankreek, Oct. 1952.

133
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Fig. 5. Virgin forest in the Malobbi range, with severe fire-scars from a food-ground (in the foreground). -- Tapanahoni, Malobbi, Oct. 1952.

Fig. 6. Food-ground on river terrace, planted for three months. In the foreground, rice and cassava, behind them maize. The surroundings are kapoeweri and, at the right, high second growth. Tapanahoni, Drietabbetje, March, 1952.

6:Hurault--4 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

/5/

CHAPTER I

MAN AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Country

133
[131] The Boni live along the middle course of the Lawa, principal tributary of the Maroni, above Abounasounga Falls. This region presents the same characteristics as the rest of Guiana: it is a very worn-down peneplain which, seen from the air, gives the impression of an immense plateau from which emerge every now and then isolated mountain massifs. When one travels across this peneplain, one perceives that in its detailed aspects it is very hilly everywhere; the terrain looks like an infinite covering of whitecaps of little hills as anonymous as the waves of the sea, whose always steep slopes end in swamps or pinotières drained by an infinitely complex maze of "criques" [creeks] (1); the shapes

1. In Guiana brooks and small rivers are called "criques."

and dimensions of these hills and valleys depend on the nature of the substratum, and their appearance on aerial photographs makes possible the drawing up of a concise geological map. The zones of "green rocks" are marked by much more important valleys and hills, reaching an altitude of 800 meters, with massive shapes and very steep slopes.

The other types of terrain most often lead to a very broken-up relief, the dimensions of the valleys and hills scarcely going over 300 meters, with local differences of altitude of from 50 to 100 meters.

/5 cont./

133 182 This extreme fragmentation of the relief must be remembered as one of the ecological factors influencing the human peopling most directly; it renders the transport of heavy loads impracticable, the establishing of roads practically impossible. Men are led to [361] settle along the rivers, which constitute the only routes of penetration toward the interior of the country.

133 132 All the important rivers flow into an alluvial valley whose width varies from some tens of meters to a kilometer, dry during the greater part /6/ of the year, but flooded under several meters 134 241 of water during the great rains of May-June. This annual inundation makes the alluvial lands unfit for agriculture; the inhabitants of Guiana cultivate only sloping lands and even very steep slopes readily; for good drainage of the soil is indispensable for the raising of manioc whose tubers, which remain in the ground for more than a year, are threatened with rotting.

311 The cultivable zone is in fact closely limited around each village. Practically, it is limited to a strip of 1,500 to 2,000 meters along the banks of each watercourse accessible to pirogues. [482] Transport of manioc tubers, carried on by the women several [462] times a month, becomes impracticable if the distance to be covered with loads is greater than two kilometers at the maximum (1).

[101] [131] [184]

1. The Djuka, very numerous on the Tapanahoni, cultivate as far as three or four kilometers from the river; but in general, the Refugee Blacks prefer to build farming habitations at a distance of several days' by boat from their village when this gives them the possibility of farming in the neighborhood of the banks.

/6 cont./

133 Flooding is very variable according to the configuration of the rivers and the nature of the terrain.

133 361 171 At the Creole village of Grigel, situated at the bottom of a glove-finger loop of the Waki River, the June flooding reaches a level of eight meters above the average level in the dry season; the Creole and Indian villages of the Waki are established on hills. On the contrary, along the Lawa whose course is rectilinear, the variation in level is seldom greater than four meters. The maximum water level is 50 centimeters to one meter /above/ the soil of the alluvial terrace. Several of the Creole and Boni villages of the Lawa are even established at the very edge of the great river; the houses are built on piles and their occupants go home by boat during several weeks of the year. Nevertheless, most of the villages and farming habitations are outside the reach of flooding on terraces situated about five meters above the high-water mark, which are found from place to place at the edge of the river and which perhaps mark vestiges of an ancient terrace. This is notably the case with Boniville and Loka villages.

342 484

139 The whole of the territory is entirely covered by equatorial forest: a forest continuous and dense which extends over hundreds of kilometers without a village, without a clearing, without a trail.

The Guiana forest is less high than is ordinarily thought. It is an infinite succession of trees of all dimensions and of extremely varied species, among which true giants are rare; the average height of the cover is around 30 meters, and large trunks are rare.

824 The variety of species is very great; and the useful ones, few in number and dispersed, are difficult to exploit. The Refugee Blacks, who have a deep knowledge of the forest and its resources, utilize scarcely ten species out of the some 200 which they differentiate, judging the others unusable either because their

/6 cont./

824 wood is too hard to be worked with ordinary instruments or, on the contrary, because it is too soft, too easily attacked by insects, or
311 has a tendency to rot. The zone exploitable by native procedures is limited (for the floodable zones /1/ do not allow fine woods) to the slope of the hills bordering the valley of the watercourses accessible to pirogues; beyond, the cartage of felled trunks becomes impracticable.

139 A very dense epiphytic vegetation connects the trees with
136 their upper parts; it is there that life blossoms out: flowers, birds, insects, and monkeys.

484 Progress through the forest is very arduous. The undergrowth,
480 shrubs, bushes, bound together by fine and elastic lianas, offers
[132] a constant obstacle, the machete /sabre/ must be wielded at each
[412] step. The nature of the terrain, a succession of bogs and hills
[133] with steep and slippery slopes, makes walking for heavily loaded men exhausting. On the trail one succeeds with difficulty in making more than 15 to 20 kilometers a day; in the uninhabited forest one can scarcely advance five to six kilometers a day by cutting the strict minimum as one does when hunting. The opening of a route permitting the passage of heavily laden men cannot progress more than three kilometers a day on the average.

139 The great forest offers few real dangers, but it is an environ-
182 ment profoundly hostile to man, which does not present spontaneously any food resource and allows establishment of villages and cultivated areas only at the price of great efforts.

136 One meets few animals in the interior of the forest, and the resources for hunting are very limited; on the other hand, there are few harmful animals; wild beasts are few and practically do not appear; snakes are much rarer than on the coast and represent
164 only a slight danger. The most real dangers of the forest come from the fall of branches and epiphytes, principally when it is cleared for cultivation; each year there are accidents of this kind in Boni country. Besides, work in the forest is the occasion for many wounds which tend to ulcerate.

/1 cont./

132 [513] The climate is relatively temperate and easy for the European to stand. In the forest the thermometer does not rise to more than 28° during the hot hours, to go back down to 20° at the end of the night: everyone sleeps with a blanket, Refugee Blacks and Creoles as well as Europeans. Humidity is very great during nearly all the year; precipitation averages three meters a year or about 50 centimeters less than at Cayenne. The year is divided into two seasons: "summer" from July to December, and the rainy season the rest of the year, with a maximum of precipitation in May and June. The water level varies considerably in the course of the year (several meters). The populations of the interior, spaced out along the rivers, suit the rhythm of their lives to the height of the water; the water rules transportation, fishing, and crops; moreover, a certain number of illnesses are in close relation to the rains, in particular those which have an insect for vector.

133 182 [361] [164]

241 [134] Almost everywhere the soil is very poor in organic matter and fundamental ingredients, very waterlogged necessitating the practice of an itinerant agriculture on burned-over areas; the period of fallow ground varies from two to ten years, the optimum seeming to be about six. The inhabitants of Guiana cannot allow ground to lie fallow regularly because of the ravages of the manioc ant, /8/ which is active especially in habitually cultivated zones.

[136] [134] Vain and costly efforts made by Europeans notably at Saint-Jean du Maroni about 1950, have shown that the fertility of lands not burned over is practically nil. The Indians and the Refugee Blacks consider that the fertility of the soil depends exclusively on the weight of cinders laid down during the burning.

[242]

When burned-over areas are cultivated, only one harvest is obtained; but this harvest is abundant, and the soil thus utilized can be regarded as relatively fertile. The knocking down and burning do not require great labor, so that primitive agricultural methods can be considered to give a good yield. As a matter of fact, the diverse populations of Guiana, Creoles and Refugee Blacks, have entirely adopted the methods of work resulting from the millennial

241 179

/8 cont./

241 experience of the American Indians, which seem the only utilizable
179 ones in the interior of the country.

Thus these populations which are so varied have in large measure the same agriculture and the same food.

241 Basic crops are manioc, consumed in the form of couac
[262] (flour roasted and granulated) which is the base food, the Indian yam, and tubers analogous to taro (dachine, "Caribbean cabbage").
[171] The Refugee Blacks plant mountain rice in addition. The Creoles do not plant rice but have on the other hand a greater variety of vegetables and fruits.

311 Men in Guiana live on the rivers; villages and cultivated
36 lands are to be found on their banks; everywhere else one finds
182 only the deserted forest; only Creole gold miners, constrained by their work, sometimes establish their villages far from watercourses.
181 The Refugee Blacks, like the Indians, love the rivers where they
182 find, along with water and light, the possibility of moving with-
171 out hindrance; they are a people of canoeists; their traditions are widely influenced by life on the river, and their mode of living finds in this a deep originality.

131 In fact, setting aside the gold miners' villages, we can say
133 that the populations of the Guianas living by exploitation of the
182 natural resources of the country have a linear habitat: it can be
171 estimated not in surface but in length, for it is limited to a band of one kilometer along each watercourse accessible to pirogues. These watercourses are limited in number, for one can take for granted that at a distance of some 20 kilometers from the source of each river, the congestion caused by fallen trees and parasitic vegetation prevents easy movement.

[61] Actually, considering the very low density of the population,
[226] the small rivers are scarcely utilized except as fishing places.

489 All the rivers are interrupted by falls and rapids which render
501 the use of large boats impossible. The pirogues of the Refugee

/15/

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE BONI

Villages

[3] [361] [133] Localization. The principal Boni villages have for 150 years been grouped on the Lawa (1) upstream from Abattis-Cottica Falls.

1. Let us remember that the Lawa and the Tapanahoni are the streams forming the Maroni. The Lawa constitutes the border between Surinam and French Guiana.

The limit of Boni country toward the south is vague. However, it is taken for granted that all the Abattis-Gottica belong [361] to the Boni. Boni farming villages and Djuka villages coexist downstream from the Abattis-Cottica as far as Abounasounga. Below Abounasounga begins Djuka country properly speaking (2)

2. In reality this is a zone of colonization, for the "great country" of the Djuka is the Tapanahoni. But the customary rights they possess on the Lawa lands are contested by no one.

423 643 [131] Traditionally, the Boni used to consider the whole of the upper basin of the Maroni as their domain or at the very least as territory under the authority of the grand man. Thus it was at

6:Hurault--21 K-5 (1948-1958)1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni
French Guiana SR3
/16/
B
F
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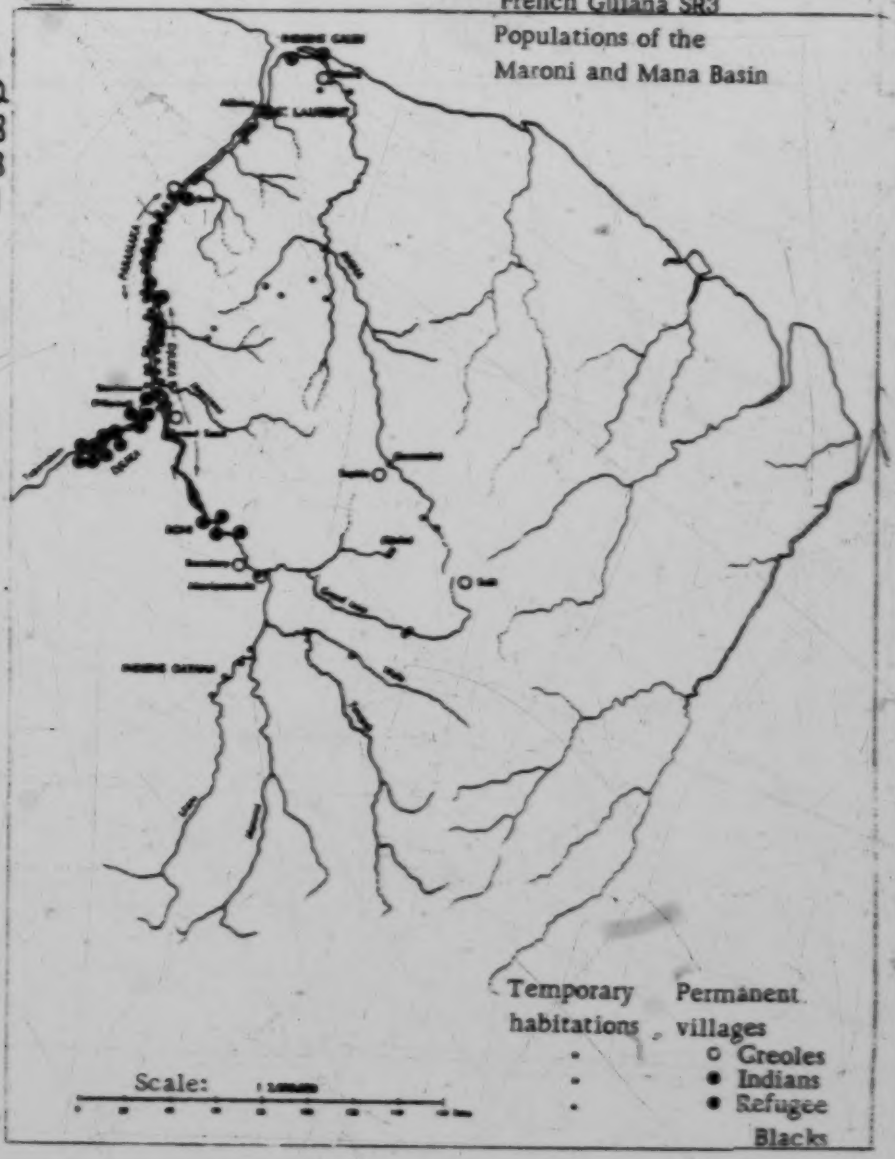

Fig. 1

6.Hurault--Sca K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

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Fig. 5. Boni Village

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769
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613

Fig. 6. The fraga
of the Koruka

6:Hurault--142 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

/98/

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311
361
423
613
621

Distribution of Lands in the Neighborhood
of the Principal Boni Villages

● Permanent villages
— Boundary lines

Scale:

/K. or Cr. = Creek,
Lieu-dit = locality,
h. du grand man = habitation of the grand man,
Zone inondable = floodable zone./

Fig. 16.

6:Hurault--145 K-5 (1948 1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

/facing p. 100/

102
103
● 133
241
361

Boni Farming Habitations South of the Confluence with the Inini

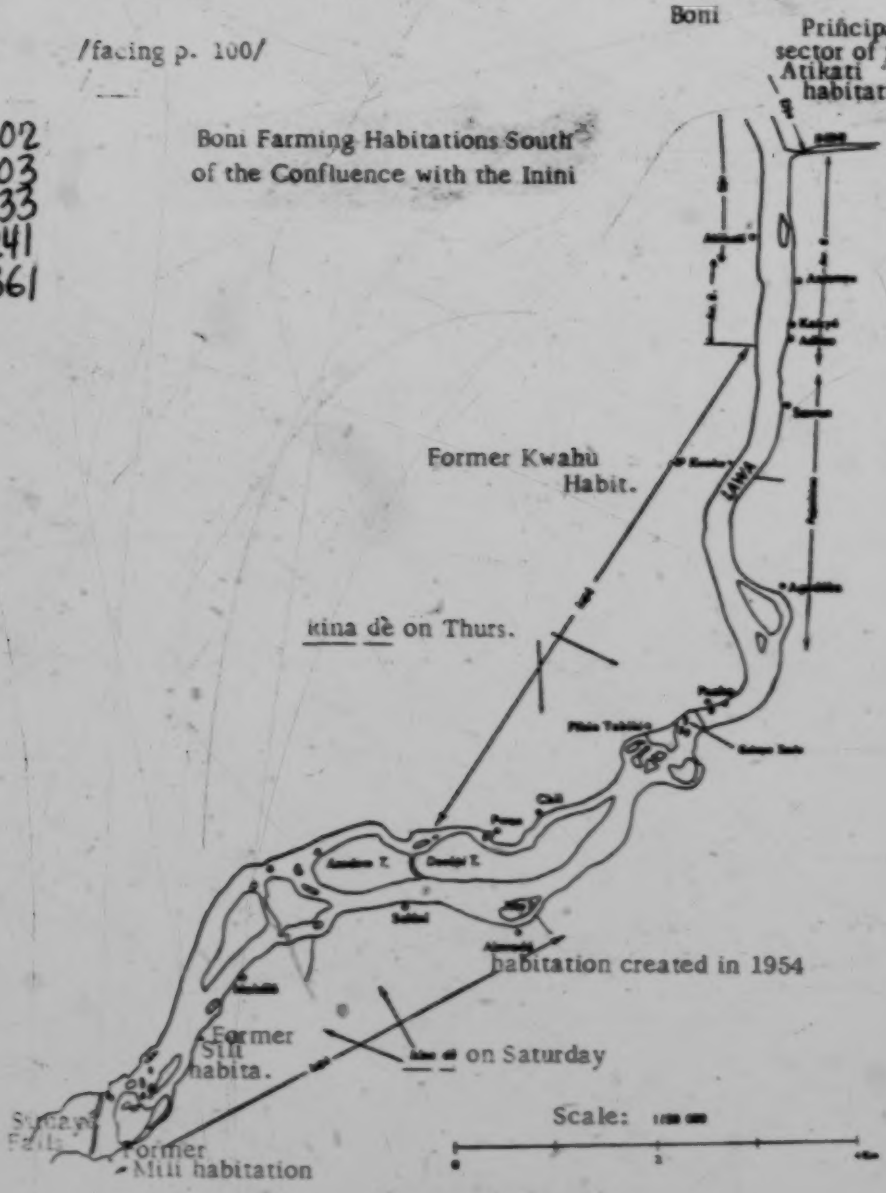


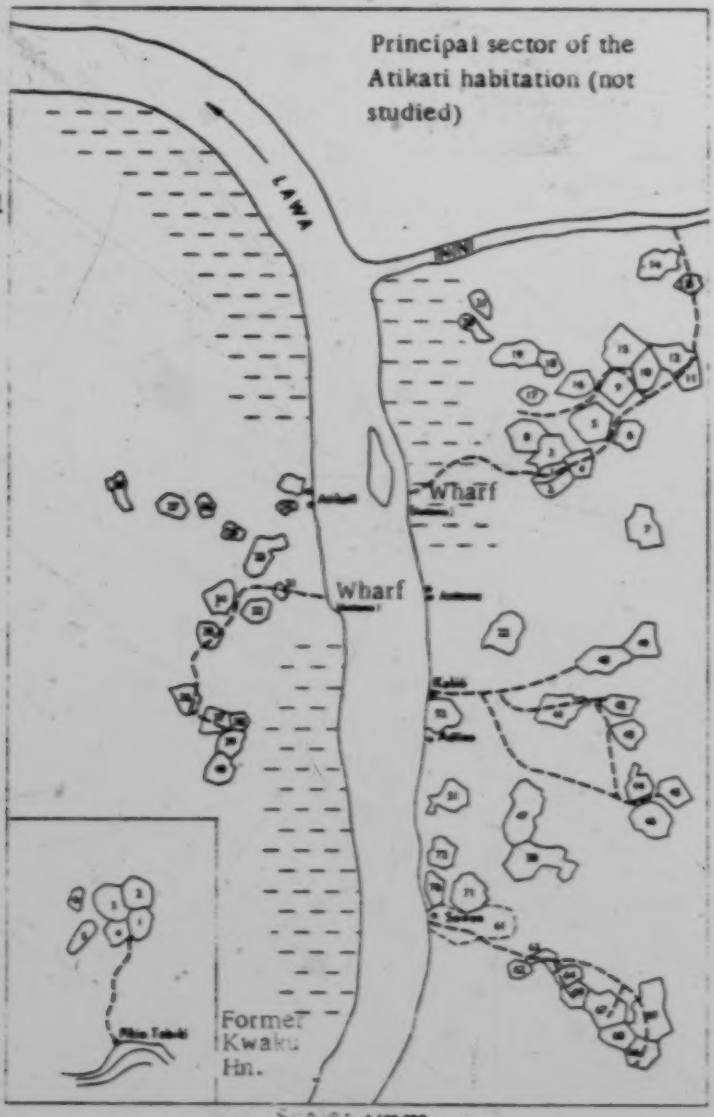
Fig. 17.

6:Hurault--158 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

/facing p. 108/

102
103
133
241
361
423
613
504

Distribution of Lands among the Lineages
in the Neighborhood of the Confluence with the Inini



Scale: 1/20 000

After photographs by the 003/200 IGN mission, taken in October, 1956

• farming habitation

floodable zone

clearings studied in January, 1957

Fig. 18.

6:Hurault--166a K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

/facing p. 114/

/.. a/

133
139
226
501

Fig. 19: Fishing à la nivrée.

6:Hurault--172 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8 Boni

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133
211
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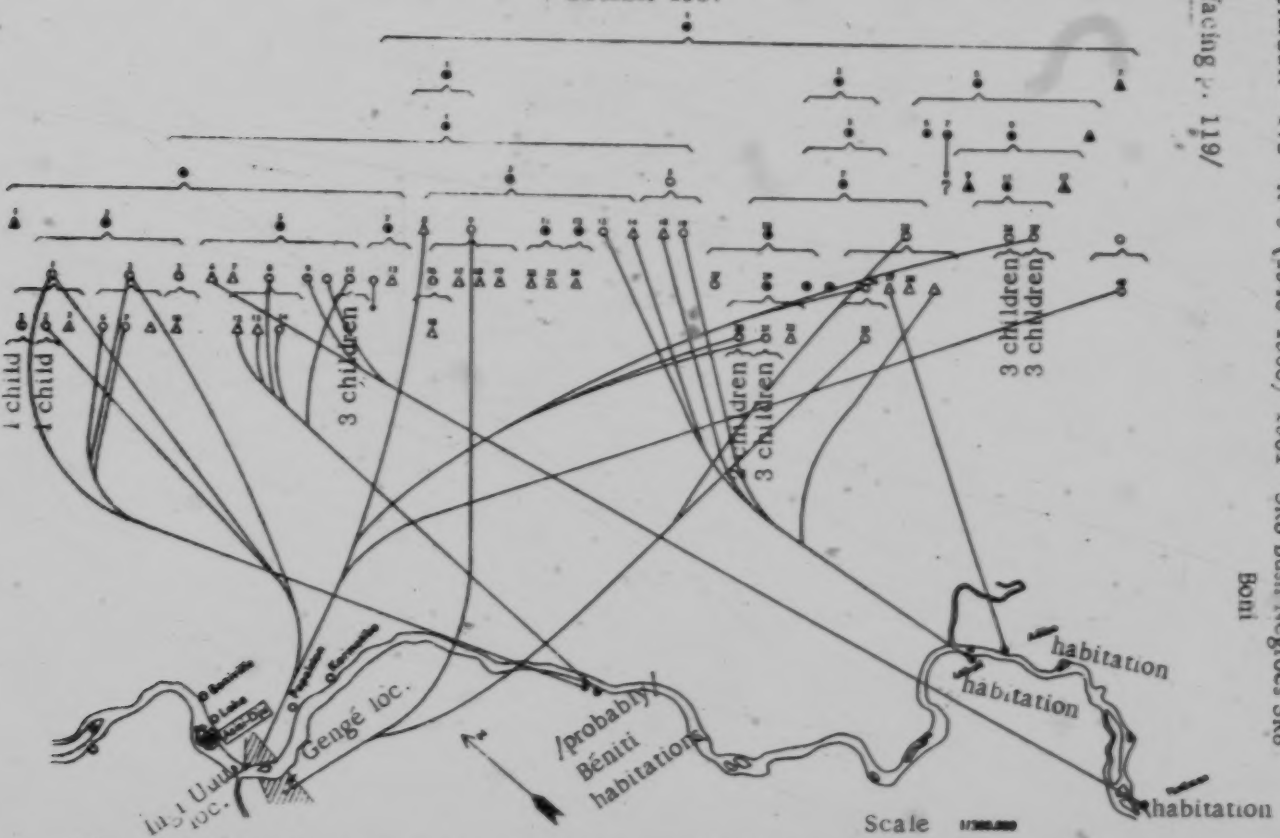
913
721

Fig. 20.

Grouping of the Members of the Dju Lineage into Sectors and Farming Habitations October 1957



This chart shows the absence of any tendency toward the scission of the lineage into separate fractions.

/facing p. 119/

6:Hurault--265a K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

764
133
292
411
501

Fig. 25. The coffin is placed on board a canoe.

6:Hurault--412a K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

133
137
501
764

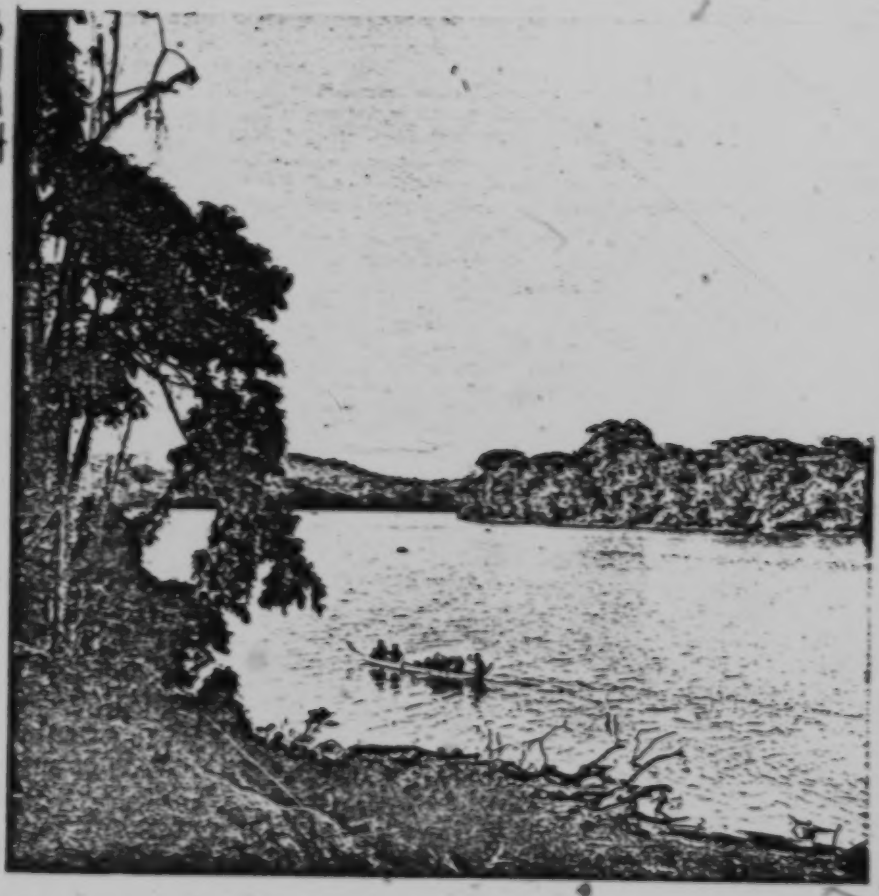


Fig. 29. The last trip of a dead person on the river.

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A (p. 576)
B (p. 577)
C (p. 578)
D (p. 579)

Chart of Positions of End Map /facing p. 576/

6:Hurault--576 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

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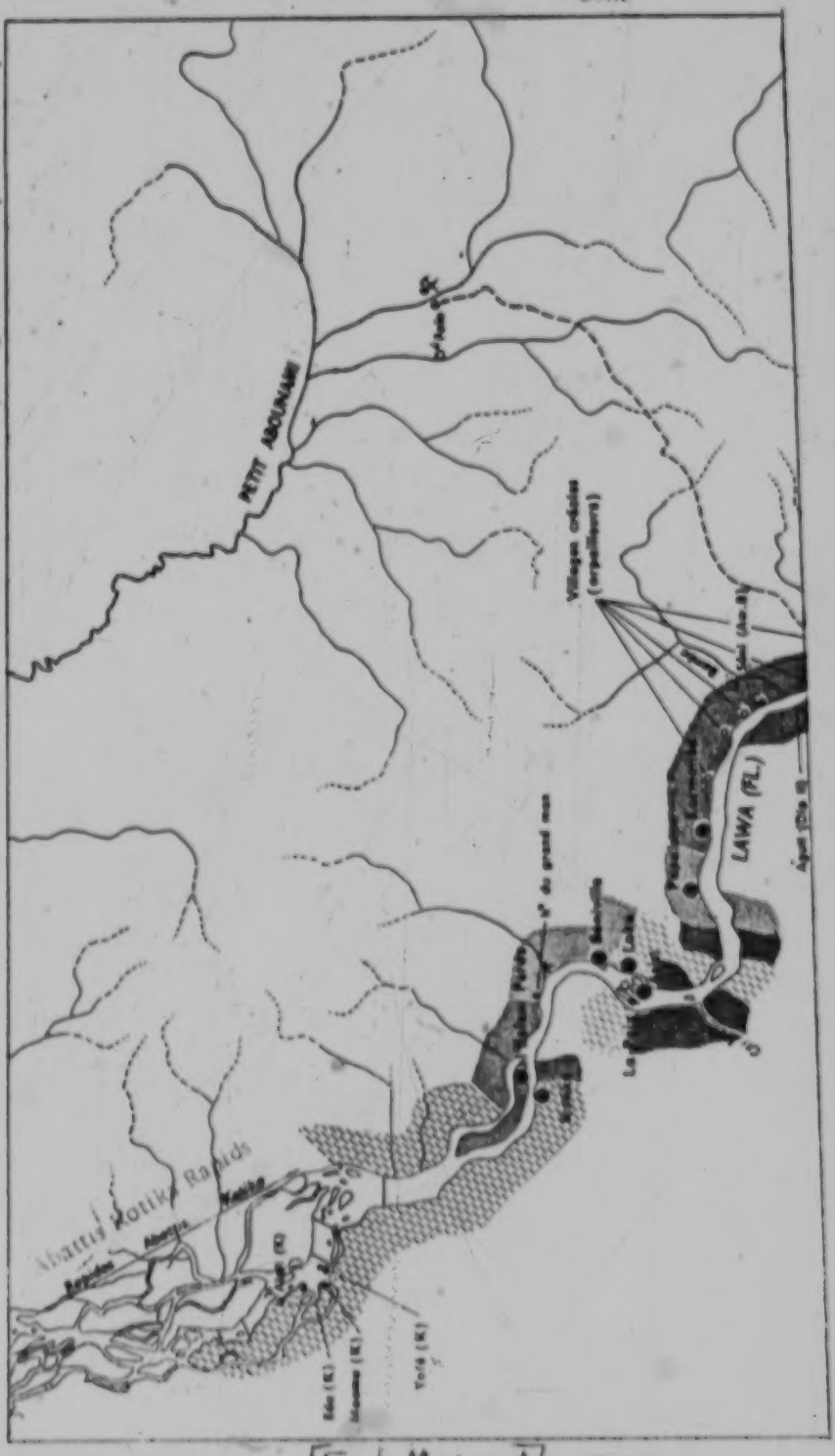
361
423
613
614
621



[End Map - A]

102
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316
361
423
613
614
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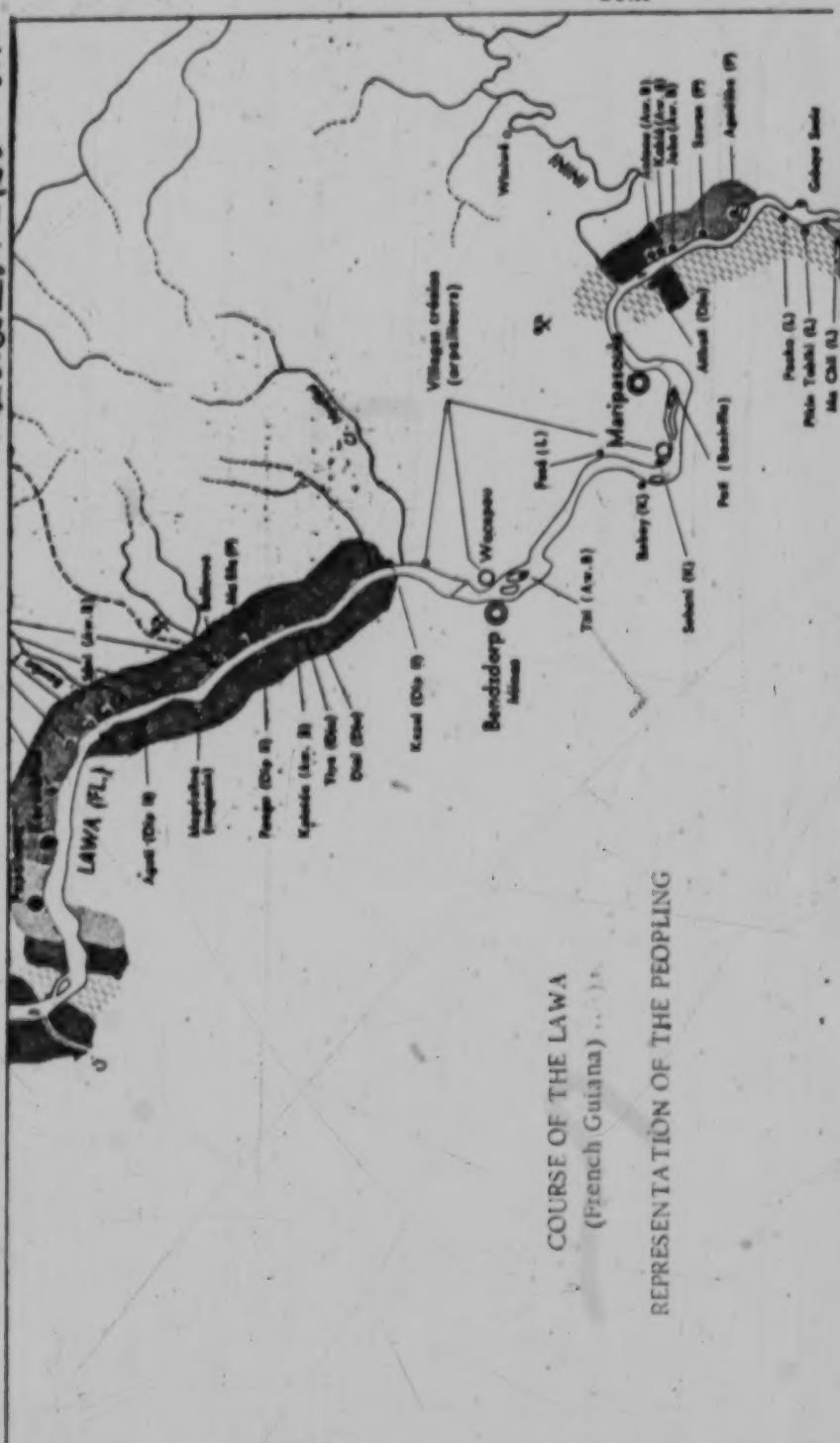
LAWA (FL.)
Agoni (Ok. R.)
Kaw (Ok. R.)
Kaw (Ok.)
Dali (Ok.)
Kawl (Ok. R.)
Wacapou
Bandadorp
Mines
Village créoles
(ex-pêcheurs)
Maripasoula
Poste (FL.)
Poste (Fl.)
Poste (FL.)
Poste (FL.)
Poste (FL

Villages and Farming Habitations
in 1958

- Boni residence villages
- Boni farming habitations
- Creole villages
- European establishments
- Creole habitations
- Small gold workings
- Indian villages

Lands to which the Boni lineages

- (K) Kotika lo
- (Dip) Dipéiu lo
- (D) Dikan lo
- (L) Lapé lo
- (Dju) Dju lo

6:Hurault--578 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8 Boni

102
103
131
133
162
311
316
361
423
613
614
621

Lands belonging to the Boni lineages

(D) Dikan lo

(L) Lapé lo

(Dju) Dju lo

(Aw.B.) Awara Bakka lo

(P) Papaïston lo

Scale 1/200.000

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Km.

Tampok

Litani

Tapiwa (Papaïston)

End Map 7

6:Hurault--579 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

St Hurault

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361

423

487

504

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614

SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

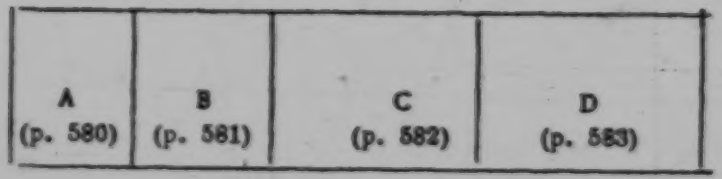

Chart of Positions of End Plate /facing p. 580/

6:Hurault--580 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

DIVISION OF LANDS AMONG THE LINEAGES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE PRINCIPAL BONI VILLAGES

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311
361
423
489
613
614
504

Photographic montage made with the help of photographs of Field Trip 007/200 IGN Guiana Scale 1/20 000 Taken in October, 1956

[End Plate - A]

6:Hurault--581 K-S (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

Scale 1/50 000

[End Plate - B]

6:Hurault--582 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SRB Bush Negroes SRB
Boni

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487
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614

Scale 1 / 20 000

[End Plate-C]

Cllurault--583 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8 - Boni

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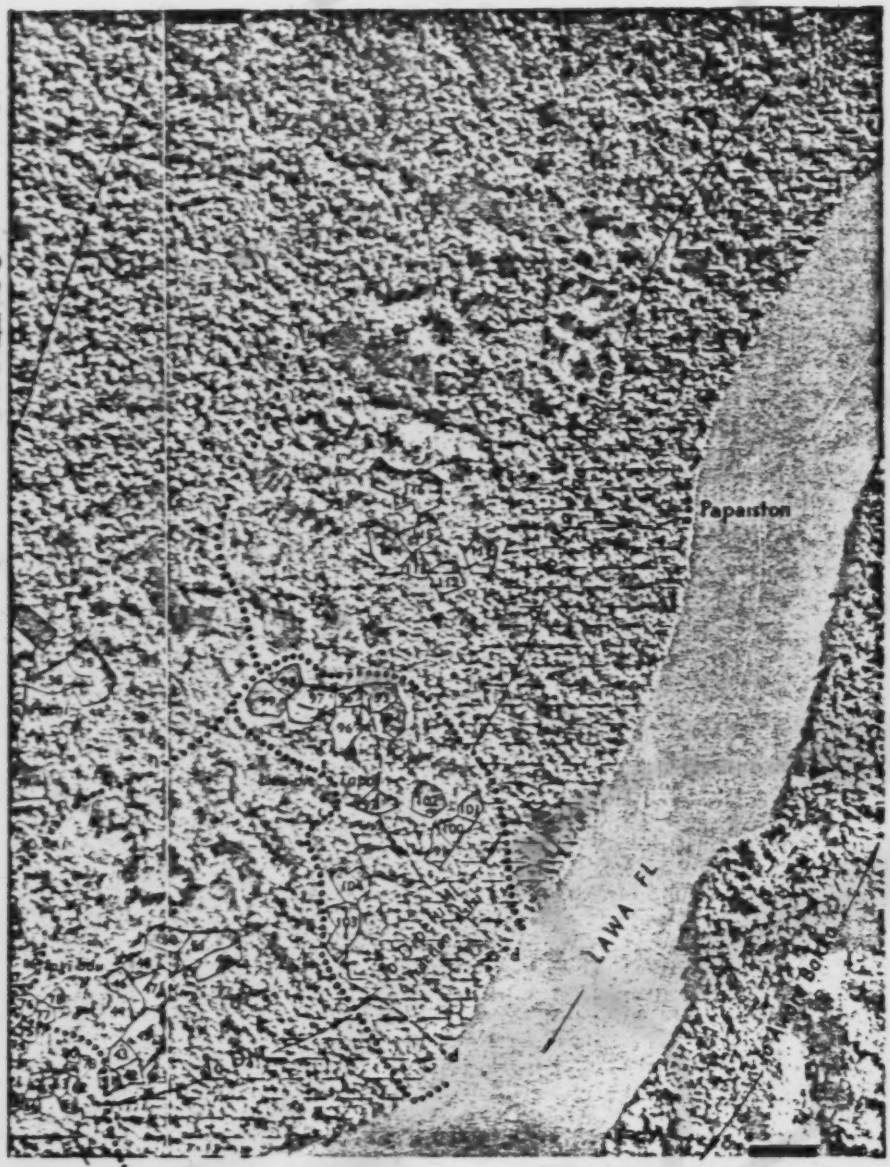
614



Agodé Permanent villages
clearings
floodable zones
boundaries not known
farming habitation
dégrad (wharf)
path
approximate boundaries of agricultural land

[End Plate - D]